

What is Rubella?

Rubella, sometimes called “German measles,” is a disease caused by a virus. The infection is usually mild with fever and rash. But, if a pregnant woman gets infected, the virus can cause serious birth defects.

The MMR vaccine protects against rubella. Before the MMR vaccine, more than 50,000 people in the U.S. got rubella each year. After the vaccine became widely used, the number declined rapidly, to fewer than 1,000 people per year.

Rubella is no longer circulating naturally in the U.S., but it is found in other countries, and people with rubella can travel to the U.S. anytime. Thus, rubella outbreaks still occur among groups of people who are not vaccinated.

What are Symptoms of Rubella?

Rubella usually causes the following symptoms in children:

- Rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body
- Low fever (less than 101 degrees)

These symptoms last 2 or 3 days.

Older children and adults may also have swollen glands and symptoms like a cold before the rash appears. Aching joints occur in many cases, especially among young women.

About half of the people who get rubella do not have symptoms.

How Does Rubella Spread?

Rubella spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

The disease is most contagious when the person has a rash. But it can spread up to 7 days before the rash appears. People without symptoms can still spread rubella.

Is there a Vaccine for Rubella?

The MMR vaccine is a shot that includes vaccines for three diseases—measles, mumps, and *rubella*. It protects children from rubella by preparing their bodies to fight the rubella virus. Almost all children (at least 95 children out of 100) who get two doses of the MMR vaccine will be protected from rubella.

If you have any questions, please contact Allen County Public Health at 419-228-4457. Health Department staff members are available to answer your questions Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You can also visit www.allencountypublichealth.org and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Web site at www.emergency.cdc.gov for additional information.